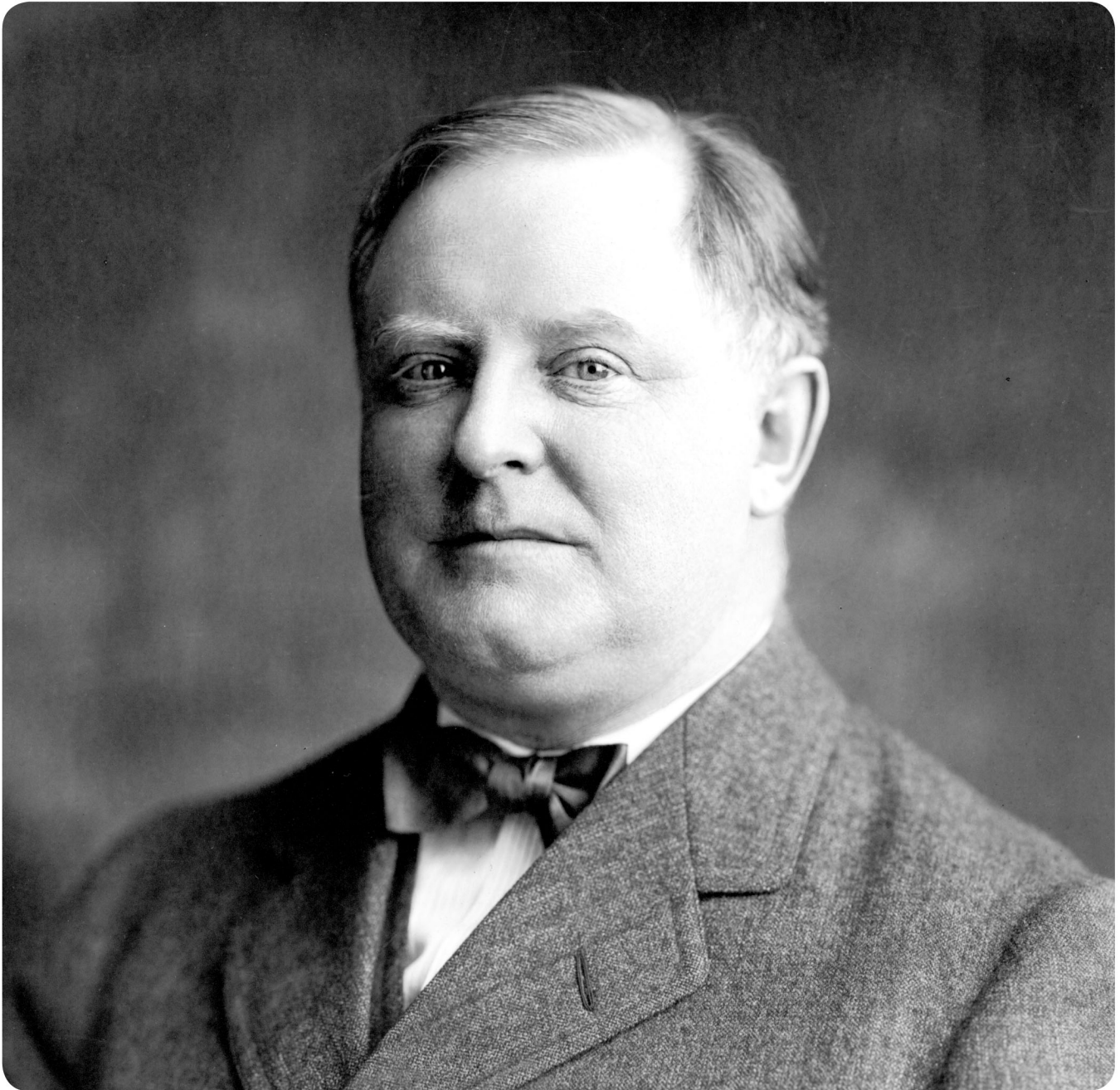


Famous Kansan



William Allen White

1868-1944

William Allen White was 11 when he became a “printer’s devil” at the local newspaper office. He helped ink the presses. He also swept floors and delivered newspapers. It was a summer job for White, but this experience helped him realize the power of words. White’s father taught him a love of people and politics. White’s mother taught him to appreciate books and to follow his beliefs.



William Allen White was born in Emporia. His family moved to El Dorado when he was young. He returned to Emporia when he bought his own newspaper, the *Emporia Gazette*. White used his newspaper as a way to speak for ordinary people. Newspaper owners and editors use articles they write, called editorials, to share their ideas and opinions with their readers. White’s readers liked what he wrote. They believed White spoke for them.

William Allen White was often asked to share his ideas with leaders, too. President Theodore Roosevelt visited several times in Kansas to hear White’s opinion. Other presidents also came to Kansas to talk with White. Presidents Herbert Hoover, William Howard Taft, Warren Harding, and Calvin Coolidge came to hear what White had to say.

In 1924 William Allen White decided to run for governor of Kansas. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a hate group from the south, was growing in Kansas. White knew that this would cause trouble. Other candidates for governor refused to give their opinion about the KKK in Kansas. White talked to people about how state officials should stop this hate group from doing business in Kansas. White did not expect to win the election. But, his actions brought attention to the issue. Kansas courts were able to stop the KKK. Kansas was the first state to use existing state business laws to stop the KKK.

William Allen White wrote many editorials and 23 books. He was one of the founders of the Book of the Month Club. Later teachers in Kansas wanted children to know about White. They started the William Allen White Children’s Book Awards. Each year students get to vote to select their favorite book.

